



BLACK-LEGGED GOLDEN ORB-WEB SPIDER

black-legged nephila (English); swart-poot goue wawielweb spinnekop (Afrikaans); isicabucabu esinemilenze emnyama sabu;wembu obuyinatilinga obusegolide (isiZulu); sekgo sa maoto matsho sa tepo e sedikedikwe ye mmala wa kgauta (seSotho).

Nephilidae (*Nephila fenestrata*)

DESCRIPTION

Size: females large (30-40 mm); males much smaller.

Female: Colour: colour pattern distinct; abdomen bright and varies from yellow (Fig. 1) to cream with posterior region bluish (Fig. 2); ventrally yellow (Fig. 3); legs black; sternum yellow with black spot. **Carapace:** longer than wide; **eyes:** 8 in 2 evenly spaced rows; **abdomen:** large, elongated and cylindrical; **legs:** long and slender, with conspicuous tufts of setae on tibiae of legs I, II and IV (Fig. 3). **Male:** much smaller, uniformly pale in colour. **Juveniles:** with pattern on abdomen differing from females.

HABITAT

Found in the grassland, savanna and open forest and are frequently encountered in gardens.

BEHAVIOUR

These spiders build large (1-1.5m) orb-webs. The viscid spiral of the web is yellowish golden and this is characteristic for the nephilas. The radii of the web are pulled out of their direct course to give it a notched appearance. The supporting lines are very strong and some resistance is felt when one wanders into them. The spiders make use of the same web over a long period of time, replacing only the viscid lines. In the older spiders the web is only half a circle while in the young ones the orb is more complete. The small male is found on the web of the female. The spiders live for about one year. They prey on a wide range of flying insects.

DISTRIBUTION

Wide distribution throughout South Africa (Fig. 4), commonly found in summer months. They are widely distributed throughout Africa, but more common in the warmer humid region.

MEDICAL IMPORTANCE

There is no information available about the effect of their venom on humans.

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